

AA

There I was. I had been here hundreds of times before, but this time was different. It was different because of the way I was feeling. I had avoided this place for so long; this emotional state.

The room was dimly lit, the over-head florescent lights did not reflect off the wood paneled walls the way the reflected off the polished counter top. The room hummed softly as people mingled and conversed with their partners. The pool balls clicked as the stick hit them into the pockets. Willie Nelson played over the speakers, trying to keep the room at an upbeat tempo. The room smelled of beer and stale chips. It was almost peaceful, the smells, the sounds, the sights, it almost took me away from the reason I was really there in the first place.

The bottles were all lined up, creating a sort of rainbow of liquid sunshine; each one with its little label, differentiating itself from the rest of the pack. The reds, the browns, the greens, they all soaked up the light and reflected the light rays of the glass surrounding the labels. The way the lights glistened against those glass bottles illuminated the wood of the bar in front of them.

There I sat at the bar. I sat on a tall metal stool, leaning on a shine wooden bar. Dean was down the bar hitting on some newly-21 female customer. Dean is tall and thick. His dark hair fell to about his shoulders, and the sides were tucked behind his ears just like they were every day. His hazel eyes could see you; his eyes could see into your soul. I had been judged by his eyes many times in my days at the bar. He rarely smiled, and when he did, it quickly flashed across his face and then quickly disappeared again. I saw this quick smile come and go as the girl flipped her blonde hair over her shoulder and giggled a little too loudly. I wondered to myself what she could have said to make that smile appear on his face. I swirled the water

around in my glass, watching the ice cubes clank together and hit the sides of the glass. So there I sat, alone with my thoughts; alone with the temptation of just one more sip. It had been 18 months since my last.

“Michael, I’m serious this time! I’m done!” The door slammed behind Carrie as she ran from the house, tears staining her smooth skin. I had come home from yet another job interview with no luck. This was the last straw for her. 19 months ago, I met the love of my life, Carrie DeAndrew. Carrie was medium height, with deep auburn hair, and gorgeous electric-green eyes. What made her beautiful was not her looks, but the way she carried herself. She was proud and noble. She found the world humorous, and she could take absolutely anything in the entire world and find humor in it. Her laugh was contagious. When she laughed, my entire world changed. The sound echoed through the room and could make anyone around to hear it, smile. It was that smile and that laugh that made me want to be a better person. I got clean. I got clean because she asked me to. I would have done absolutely anything for her.

I ended up back in this bar because she walked out that door 2 short hours before. She walked out the door because I still was not good enough for the man she wanted to be with.

So there I sat. Staring at those bottles with the burning intensity I had looked at Carrie with just the night before. As I stared into my glass, all I could see was her auburn hair and the way it fell over her shoulder at night while she was asleep. I always watched her, and she never knew it. I would miss seeing that peaceful look on her face while she slept. I wanted a drink; a little liquid to drown my sorrows away.

“Mike, what are you doing here? I told you I didn’t want to see you here anymore.”

Dean had spotted me, and moved back down the bar as the girl got up from her seat. She walked smoothly across the room, and went through the door. The slam behind her sounded all too familiar to the sound I had heard just a few hours earlier.

I swirled my drink around in my glass a little longer, before I looked up into his piercing eyes. “She left, man. I’m just looking for a little help.” He was staring at me with a concerned but cautious look. He looked away, breaking the deep eye contact. I looked down at my drink again and began to swirl the ice cubes around again. The cubes were much smaller now, and the outside of the glass had begun to sweat. After what felt like hours, Dean looked back over at me.

“Mike, you aren’t going to find what you’re looking for in here. You know that, and I know that. Oh, and I’m not serving you anyway. Get out.” He walked away and left me there. Alone again.

Knock, knock. 15 minutes later, I found myself standing on her front steps, shivering in the chilly night air. *What if she didn’t answer? What if she slammed the door in my face?* All the what-if’s came flooding into my mind as I hear the lock click in the door. The wooden front door swung open slowly, sending a pool of light over me on the front steps.

“Michael, what are you doing here?”